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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000430

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/30/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKEY: GAZA RECONSTRUCTION PLEDGE REFLECTS  
PUBLIC, PRIVATE DONATIONS

REF: A. STATE 20388  
[1](#)B. ANKARA 252  
[1](#)C. ANKARA 19

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Turkey pledged \$ 93 million at the Egyptian-hosted March 2 donors' conference in Sharm al-Sheikh. The GOT will donate \$ 50 million to in-kind reconstruction projects in coordination with the Palestinian Authority. The remaining \$ 43 million reflects private donations made through GOT-sponsored fundraising drives. The GOT transferred these funds to the Turkish Red Crescent, the only Turkish organization authorized by the Israeli Government to operate in the Palestinian territories. In addition to efforts sanctioned by the GOT, several prominent Turkish NGOs aggressively solicited donations. The total raised by these organizations or how much of the funds actually reached Gaza is unclear. Of those that did, Turkish, Israeli, and Palestinian Authority officials bemoaned that most ended up in Hamas's hands. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The plight of the Palestinians during the Gaza crisis struck a particularly strong chord with the Turkish people and GOT leadership. Criticizing Israel's excessive use of force has also featured prominently in pre-March 29 nationwide local election campaign rhetoric, which served to stoke already high public emotions. Omnipresent fundraising solicitations featuring inflammatory photos of crying, bloodied children and destroyed mosques dominated billboards, bus sides, and half-page ads in most major newspapers. As a result, the Turkish people opened their wallets wide and donated at their places of work, schools, mosques, and on the street to a diverse group of organizations.

[1](#)3. (C) The Prime Ministry, Parliament, Religious Affairs Directorate (Diyanet), and national broadcaster Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) held fundraising campaigns coordinated by a special office established at the Prime Ministry. For example, the Diyanet posted fliers listing a bank account for donations at government-regulated mosques and muftis, offices. All funds raised by GOT agencies were transferred to the Turkish Red Crescent. These donations constitute \$ 43 million of the \$ 93 million pledged at the Egyptian-hosted March 2 donors' conference in Sharm al-Sheikh, explained MFA Israel desk officer Ralf Alp Denktas. The GOT will provide the remaining \$ 50 million through in-kind project-based donations in coordination with the Palestinian Authority. The Turkish Government has not yet identified which projects it will support.

[1](#)4. (C) A large number of Turkish NGOs collected money for Gaza including the Turkish Red Crescent, Deniz Feneri, Human Rights and Freedoms Humanitarian Assistance Foundation (IHH),

Kimse Yok Mu, the Cansuyu Foundation, and the Islamist-oriented Saadet Party. The Turkish Red Crescent is the only Turkish organization sanctioned by the Israeli Government to operate in the Palestinian territories. MFA Multilateral Affairs Department Head Bogac Guldere underscored the GOT has no relations with any group other than the Turkish Red Crescent and does not monitor the collection or distribution of donations solicited by private groups. IHH, Deniz Feneri, and other NGOs have chartered ships to deliver medical supplies and food to Egyptian ports, which then enter Gaza through the Rafah border crossing. It is unclear how much of the funds raised by these organizations actually reached Gaza. However, Turkish, Israeli, and Palestinian Authority officials acknowledged to us that intentionally or not, most donations that left Turkey ended up in Hamas's hands (REF B).

15. (C) Comment: Turkey's Interior Ministry is responsible for registering and auditing the nation's 60,000 NGOs and 55,000 charitable organizations. Ministry officials charged with this massive undertaking acknowledge they lack the training and capacity to perform the job and have indicated they would welcome U.S. assistance. REF C outlines Post's proposal for a NADR-funded training program on "Identifying Terrorism Finance via NGOs and Charitable Organizations" and for an assessment of the Interior Ministries' electronic reporting and filing systems to help them identify suspicious financial activity. Implementing this proposal would constitute a significant first step toward enabling the Turks to address this issue.

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